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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 1388th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 9 August 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia)
(Vice-Chairman)

- Organization of work
- Question of New Caledonia
- Organization of work

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The meeting was called to order at 3.50 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): It might be useful to start from the fact that my delegation asked to speak this morning, but was unable to do so because of the late hour.

In the deliberations of the open-ended Working Group wisely established on the initiative of the representative of Cuba, Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, my delegation made a statement on the various items on the agenda. I should like to place on record in the official verbatim records of this Committee some parts of that statement relating to the issue of racial discrimination.

On that day I said that the few recent changes including some small moves on the part of the racist Pretoria regime should not be permitted to distort the prevailing grim situation, which remains unchanged, with the majority of the indigenous population still being disenfranchised on purely racial grounds.

The situation in South Africa is under consideration not only because of the South African racist regime's occupation and exploitation of the resources of Namibia, but also because of the fact that the racist policies and practices, wherever they exist, constitute a violation of the basic rights of the indigenous population, including their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. Those who believe otherwise are urged to read once again the relevant United Nations resolutions, such as General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), which forms the basis of this Committee's work.

As the Committee is aware, its ninth preambular paragraph clearly stipulates that colonialism is always associated with segregation and discrimination. The paragraph reads as follows:

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

"The General Assembly,

"Believing that the process of liberation is irresistible and irreversible and that, in order to avoid serious crises, an end must be put to colonialism and all practices of segregation and discrimination associated therewith" (General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV)).

Therefore the General Assembly gave both the Committee of 24 and the Special Committee against Apartheid a common mandate to defend the rights of peoples, wherever they may be, to self-determination and the enjoyment of basic human rights, freedom and dignity. That was stressed by the Chairman of the Committee of 24 in his address on our behalf at the commemorative meeting convened by the Special Committee against Apartheid to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Racial Discrimination on 21 March. I would also refer the Committee to the note by the Secretary-General (A/45/525) on implementation of the Programme of Action for the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. The note contains a descriptive survey of the measures adopted by United Nations organs, including the Committee of 24, and implementation of the Decade's programme. That is what I said on that day.

Today I should like to add the following.

We are discussing racial discrimination only within the context of the impact of the racist policies and practices on efforts to implement the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which, as I said, forms the basis of our Committee's work. These policies and practices clearly hamper the peoples' inalienable right to self-determination and independence. With regard to the other aspects of these policies and practices, they fall within the competence of other bodies.

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

The Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea was kind enough, at the meeting of 24 May this year, to present a report of the Working Group (A/AC.109/L.1756). It contained five recommendations. The third - recommendation C - expressed the view of the overwhelming majority of members, as well as of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), that the Special Committee should retain the issue of apartheid as part of its deliberations within the framework of the relevant resolutions of the Committee, the language of which should be dictated by prevailing circumstances.

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to express to the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea, Ambassador Renagi Renagi Lohia, our appreciation for having worked under his chairmanship in the Working Group and in the Subcommittee. I should also like to express once again our appreciation and gratitude to the Permanent Representative of Cuba, Mr. Alarcon de Quesada, for his constructive proposal to facilitate and organize the Committee's work. We are indebted to his delegation, its head and its members, for the principled position they have always taken.

Mr. HAGOSS (Ethiopia): It was not the intention of my delegation to make a statement on the question of apartheid, as it has been the subject of very intensive consultations in which my friend and colleague from the Syrian Arab Republic is deeply involved.

There is a full-fledged Committee known as the Special Committee against Apartheid, whose main subject is apartheid. It must be very clear, however, that the Committee of 24 deals with apartheid as a manifestation of racial discrimination, which has a clear impact on the process of decolonization.

In the consultations that were held under the wise chairmanship of Mr. Adouki, we in the Ethiopian delegation addressed the question of the treatment of apartheid and the intensity of the treatment of apartheid. The representative of the Congo, who had to return to his country on urgent matters of State, relinquished his duties or, rather, deputized himself through our colleague, the Vice-Chairman of the Fourth Committee. Finally - and the representative of Papua New Guinea is my witness, as is Ambassador Van Lierop - we agreed on a formula, which is that there is a set of countries that believe that apartheid has no place in the Committee of 24 and yet another set of countries, including Ethiopia, that believe that

(Mr. Hagoss, Ethiopia)

apartheid does indeed have a place in our Committee. However, apartheid has a place in the Committee inasmuch as we are trying to describe it as an impediment to the process of decolonization, as a manifestation of racial discrimination. In the consultations that have taken place at the level of the Special Committee, the question has not been whether or not we could mention apartheid. Even the delegation of Norway has come to see things our way when it comes to the question of mentioning apartheid. We can mention apartheid. But there are realities such as the signature of the non-proliferation Treaty by South Africa. So all nuclear facilities belonging to South Africa are under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The onus is thus not on South Africa, but on the Agency. If its staff fails to do their job - they are international civil servants - we will fire them, even if the entire specialized agency must be eliminated in order to protect the interests of South Africa.

So a number of developments have taken place, even since the last special session devoted to apartheid. The question now is how best to reflect the Committee's treatment of apartheid. It is not a question of inserting it in the agenda or not, because in most of the papers, including those of the specialized agencies, it will have a place. But it has become like Indian curry: how hot will that curry be? That is the question.

Coming as I do from the capital of African politics, the city of Addis Ababa, I am very well placed to speak on the question of apartheid. We have hosted the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), so my loyalty to the question of apartheid cannot be challenged. Therefore, while we are on the subject, I would say that it is a question not of whether we can include apartheid, but rather of how to reflect the present daily reality in South Africa. As the famous Chinese leader,

(Mr. Hagoss, Ethiopia)

Chairman Mao, used to say, just as there are lessons to be gained from the positive and the negative, harm can come from both the negative and the positive. Similarly, harm can come from both the right and the left. So let us be realistic and give the question of apartheid its appropriate place in our resolutions by taking due account of the prevailing realities. If Mr. Mandela can shake hands with Mr. de Klerk and take decisions concerning the people of South Africa, can I be more Catholic than the Pope or more Islamic than the Imam? That is the question.

I say this with a degree of emotion - perhaps I am speaking with my heart rather than with my mind - but that is how we perceive it. I do not think the Committee can give up on this issue. I believe we still have an opportunity to work on the text, and I am sure that our good friend from the Syrian Arab Republic will also assist us. We have the front-line States, which are the direct parties in the area. We are also from Africa. We are also direct parties, but then there are those who are burning their fingers more than we, and therefore we have great respect for the front-line States. But between the front-line States, the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and the rest of us from the African continent, I think we can come up with something that will be agreeable to most of us. I would not throw in the towel - it is too early. I am not implying that the statement made by the Syrian representative implied that, but in the corridors I have sensed a lot of pessimism. Therefore, I would stress that there is room for understanding.

I was born into an agrarian society where one must hope even against hope itself, where one must hope even when the rains do not come. I am sure that this time around the rains will come, and when the rains come, the people of South Africa will realize how judicious our decision was.

Mr. LEHNE (Norway): I am sorry, but I came in somewhat late, while our colleague from the Syrian Arab Republic was delivering his statement. However, I got the gist of it, and the Secretariat was kind enough to give me a summary of what he had said prior to my arrival. I am not quite certain under which agenda item he was speaking or what the reason was for raising this issue here and now while we are still trying to sort out how to approach the question of apartheid in our informal drafting consultations.

(Mr. Lehne, Norway)

Admittedly, not much progress has been made: nevertheless we have been able to agree upon five paragraphs in the preambular part of one of the resolutions. I very much appreciate the statement just made by our colleague from Ethiopia. Like him, I have a strong feeling that, with regard to the question of apartheid in the context of this Committee, there is indeed scope for us to arrive at an agreement on a text for a draft resolution that may be adopted by this Committee. In my opinion, the consultations so far have been very sincere. We have approached not only problems that relate to these five preambular paragraphs, but problems that are conceptual for the whole work of our Committee.

I have stated on very many occasions during our proceedings in this Committee that, although on a principled basis my delegation would rather see apartheid dealt with in the appropriate forum allocated to apartheid, we do accept, for the sake of compromise and of bringing the proceedings forward, that the time is not yet quite ripe to drop the issue of apartheid within the context of this Committee. I say that against the background of my country's policy with respect to apartheid and also in the context of our support for the forces that are fighting apartheid around the world, in particular, in southern Africa.

Therefore, although the plenary meeting might not yet be the forum in which to discuss this matter, I have a good feeling that, during this year's session of the Committee, we may be able to reach a consensus text on how to deal with the question of apartheid. As I have said, we feel that, given a realistic political framework, it is appropriate to address the question of apartheid and that, if we adjust the language that we use in mentioning the

(Mr. Lehne, Norway)

question of apartheid, as well as the frequency of our mentioning apartheid within the context of this Committee, we may come to some sort of agreement.

I would hope that we could involve the African National Congress and other parties directly involved in the conflict within the Republic of South Africa so that we can see how to address this matter without losing sight of our common purpose: the abolition and eradication of all forms of apartheid.

Until we have had those informal consultations, the plenary meeting of this Committee is not yet the appropriate forum for going into details of that sort. I think that we can solve a lot of our differences in other forums and that we should not waste time by discussing texts paragraph by paragraph in our drafting sessions. There should be open-ended discussions aimed at solving this problem. The bottom line is whether we still want to try to come up with a consensus text or to determine that the time might not yet be ripe to do so. I think the positions on this question are so clear that we should not waste the time of the plenary meetings of this Committee to go into detailed discussion about this matter, particularly since it does not seem to me that it is on the agenda of today's meeting.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): I had hoped that in accordance with the agenda of this afternoon's meeting we would go straight to that business. However, I am pleased to see this flexibility and openness in the Committee and I hope it will be in the best interests of all the parties concerned. I had previously planned to make a proposal at the end of this afternoon's meeting, at the appropriate time, for the purposes of our consultations on the resolutions before us relating to South Africa, apartheid, military, economic activities and the specialized agencies. However, since the matter has been

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

raised, I should like to refresh the memory of Committee members on the recommendations of the Working Group, which were adopted unanimously in plenary meeting of the Committee, under the heading Recommendation C. "Question of apartheid in the deliberations of the Special Committee".

"The overwhelming majority of members shared the views expressed by the national liberation movements of South Africa that the Special Committee retain the issue of apartheid as part of its deliberations. Moreover, those representatives made this the primary focus of their remarks. (A/AC.109/L.1756, para. 20)

"In their interventions, some delegations also touched upon the idea of designing a new format which would be applied in addressing the situation in South Africa. It was agreed that the question of apartheid should be discussed under the relevant resolutions of the Committee, the language of which should be dictated by prevailing circumstances (ibid., para. 21).

I would appeal to the Committee to work in that spirit towards the adoption in plenary meeting of those two important paragraphs. I am happy to say that such a process appears to be emerging and I thank all the members who have been participating in it.

With respect to the recommendations themselves, I will discuss them at the appropriate time.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not wish to continue the discussion on whether the question of apartheid has a place in this Committee. There is a forum in which to speak on apartheid as a manifestation of decolonization - I repeat, on apartheid as a manifestation of decolonization, not on apartheid per se.

(The Chairman)

On the agenda of the Special Committee which is before me there is no item dealing with apartheid. I request members to consult document A/AC.109/L.1755. I invite those delegations that wish to speak on this matter to do so in our general discussion. What I have just said does not mean that I do not share the feelings of the delegations of Syria, Ethiopia and others, and especially of the African States members of our Subcommittee, with respect to apartheid.

(The Chairman)

I am sure all of us are doing our best for the complete eradication of apartheid. That said, I should like to stop this discussion. I invite all delegations wishing to address this subject to do so during our general discussion.

Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): I must clarify this situation. The representative of Norway had asked under which agenda item I was speaking. As I mentioned at the outset of my statement, I had asked to speak this morning under agenda item "Other matters". But owing to the lateness of the hour I did not speak, and it was agreed that I would speak at the beginning of this afternoon's meeting.

Yesterday, the representative of Norway put a similar question to the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, and I volunteered to draw the attention of our colleague of Norway to the fact that this Committee discusses apartheid on a basis on which we have agreed: as an aspect of decolonization - no more or less. At that time, I thought that amidst his many preoccupations, the representative of Norway might have forgotten that the Committee had already agreed to keep apartheid as part of its deliberations.

I was speaking yesterday in good faith as I am doing now. Therefore, I do not know what triggers this debate. I see no reason for the statements made by my colleague the representative of Ethiopia or the representative of Norway. I have a perfect right to express my views. I am afraid that I might have understood the hidden meaning of the statement of the representative of Ethiopia. I might be wrong. It was my impression that he alluded to me as being "more loyalist than the King": more nationalistic than our African brothers. Honestly, I do not know what he is driving at in his statement.

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

All I wanted was to convey in good faith the views of my country, as I have done throughout the work of the Working Group, and, like everyone else, I am entitled to do so. If this afternoon is not considered an appropriate time, I reiterate what I said at the outset: that I had intended to speak this morning, but that owing to the lateness of the hour it was agreed that I should speak at the beginning of the afternoon meeting.

Fortunately enough, the views of my delegation are in agreement with the views of other delegations. I do not see any delegation actually opposing my views. But if there is any direct or indirect reference to "a lot of pessimism in the corridors" which the representative of Ethiopia was kind enough to tell us, I would be glad to know exactly what such a reference means.

As I said, -

The CHAIRMAN: I would request that the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic avoid personal attacks on any delegation and save his arguments for our general discussion; I regret that this is not the time for that general discussion. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic wanted to speak and was invited to do so, but I intend to limit this fruitless exchange of views. I ask all delegations wishing to continue this fruitless discussion to permit us to end it now, in a spirit of cooperation, and to move on to the next item on our agenda.

Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): I am very surprised at what I heard you say, Sir. I engaged in no personal attacks at all. It is not my habit to do so. Some representatives may have been absent during our deliberations, which could account for the misunderstanding that appears to have crept into our debate. I am pretty sure that if this certain delegation had been here yesterday, he would not have

(Mr. Shaheed, Syrian Arab Republic)

made a statement in the first place. I want to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that it is not my intention to engage in a personal attack on anyone here. I have the deepest personal respect for all representatives here present. I want also to assure you, Sir, that we have not been, and will not be, an obstacle to the adoption by consensus of various draft texts.

I am afraid, Mr. Chairman, that your words may have complicated the matter. What I said at the outset was that I did not understand what the representative of Ethiopia was driving at. But does saying so constitute an attack? No. My main purpose in taking the floor again is to put things in their proper context. Some of those present may lack a clear understanding of the background of the situation.

I do not see why my remarks should trigger an answer from anyone at all. It is my country's sovereign right to express its views. As the representative of my country, I am entitled to take the floor and say whatever I wish as long as it is in accordance with the rules of procedure. I engaged in no personal attack at all and it would be most strange for anyone to try to prevent me from expressing my delegation's views. It is even stranger that I should be accused of attacks just for saying that there is something I do not understand in a statement just made right here.

I tried in good faith to make clear the position of my delegation concerning this issue, and up till now had not heard that anyone was in disagreement with me.

Mr. HAGOSS (Ethiopia): I had always entertained the illusion that the United Nations was the only place where people could understand one another because we have interpretation from six languages.

Regrettably, I have not been understood.

I did not respond to the statement by the delegation of Syria; I was very careful not to sound as if I was responding to the statement - the legitimate - statement of the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. What I said was that when we are dealing with the question of South Africa we must surely be respectful of the aspirations of the people of South Africa as legitimately represented by the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC).

Point number two: There is a negotiation going on in South Africa.

Point number three: There are earth-shaking developments, such as the signature by South Africa of a very important legal document known as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Coming as I do from a very poor country, I tend to have to cover six or seven committees. One of them is the Disarmament Commission, where we were trying to cover many developments. Like most of my friends, I had always said that South Africa would never ever be able to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty by the year 2000. But to our surprise, South Africa did so.

These are very strange circumstances. The strange bedfellows we see in Moscow, in Washington and I don't know where else are so strange that even the "conspirators for peace" themselves cannot understand it any more.

(Mr. Hagoss, Ethiopia)

That is what I was driving at. What I said was that if Mr. Nelson Mandela, a hero for whom I have great respect, can find it in the highest interests of his people to engage in a fruitful dialogue with De Klerk - who am I, no matter how much my Government has spent on the ANC and its struggle, to tell Mr. Mandela that it is wrong for him to shake hands with Mr. De Klerk if it can serve the highest interests of the people of South Africa? That is what I said. It has nothing to do with the perception of the Syrian delegation.

I said to myself, "Who am I?". I never said, "Who is the Syrian Arab Republic?" I said, "Who am I?" as an African who represents a country which gave its land and whatever limited resources it has to the African continent.

Only God knows how many times I have travelled to Dar es Salaam, to Arusha, to the capitals of Zaire and Congo, in order to represent my country on the question of the liberation of South Africa. So I was questioning myself. I said to myself, "Do I have the right credentials to say that Mr. Mandela cannot shake hands with Mr. De Klerk in order to protect the interests of his people?" I will say that again and again and again, with absolutely no reference to the sovereign decision of any other country. If my statement was not clear, I repeat that the challenge was to myself, not to the delegation of Syria. I said what I did because a subject was raised that is very dear to my heart.

If by my statement I gave the impression that I was responding to the statement of my colleague from the Syrian Arab Republic, again I apologize to him. I must have been misunderstood. I had always deluded myself that I spoke the English language. From now on I shall be very careful with my use of a borrowed language.

Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) (interpretation from Arabic): What I just said was not said in a vaccum. It is not I who initiated the present debate. I was merely attempting to answer the point raised yesterday by the representative of Norway. I preferred not to refer at the outset to the delegation of Norway out of fear that I might be misunderstood. I am by no means seeking any confrontation with any delegation here. All I was trying to do was have the record reflect my delegation's position. In no way did I intend to reopen the discussion on this subject. It is not I who brought up this issue for discussion. As I said, we had already agreed to retain this matter in our deliberations in this Committee. The matter is no more or less than that. I am not seeking a substantive discussion on this matter or to reopen the debate again because we have already done so in the working group.

Certain delegations do not participate in all our deliberations for their own reasons, and that matter is of no concern to me. But what I said just now was in answer to the point raised by the representative of Norway and what I was aiming at was to have the record reflect our position and not to reopen the debate anew, because I know that this item is not on our agenda for today.

I fail to understand what triggered these statements by some delegations here, and that, of course, is my problem. But whether the representative of Ethiopia was clear in his statement or not, that is something up to everyone here. As far as I am concerned, I did not understand his statement and that is, as I said, my problem. However, I would like to repeat again and again and again that what I said was in answer to a point raised yesterday, and I preferred not to refer to the delegation by name out of fear that I might be misunderstood. How many times must I say that? I thought the matter would be ended right there. If I had insisted on speaking this morning, I think we could have avoided this situation.

Mr. VYAS (India): I am sorry that I was not here at the start of this discussion. I must admit that when I arrived I was a trifle confused as to what agenda item was being debated. Having listened to the last few speakers, I should like to recall what the representative of Papua New Guinea said a few minutes ago: that the question of apartheid with all its colonialist implications has been dealt with by the Working Group, which was chaired by the representative of Papua New Guinea, and which recommended that this is a fit subject for our consideration and for inclusion in our resolution. I think that has been said and done. Therefore, in a constructive spirit, I would support your suggestion, Mr. Chairman, that we now end the discussion on this subject and move on to the next agenda item, whichever that may be.

The CHAIRMAN: The last speaker on my list on this subject is the representative of Papua New Guinea, despite the fact that there is a possibility that other delegations may wish to speak on the matter. Nevertheless, I have to say that I intend to close the discussion on this subject after the statement of the representative of Papua New Guinea, and if I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee agrees to this procedure.

It was so decided.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): Knowing that the representative of the Front de libération nationale kanake socialiste (FLNKS) has just flown in this morning to make a statement, I was going to appeal on behalf of my own delegation that we move on to take action on the question of New Caledonia. Since the decision has been taken, I should like to appeal to members, through you, Sir, to get straight into that matter so that the FLNKS delegation can have some rest.

QUESTION OF NEW CALEDONIA (A/AC.109/1079 and Corr.1 and A/AC.109/L.1766)

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to inform members that the Committee has received a request from the delegation of Vanuatu to be permitted to take part in the proceedings relating to New Caledonia. In accordance with established practice, and if I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee accedes to the request.

It was so decided.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the delegation of Vanuatu took a place at the Committee table.

The CHAIRMAN: Members will recall that at its 1383rd meeting on 7 August the Committee granted requests for hearing relating to this item.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Jacques Sarimin Boenghi (Front de libération nationale kanake socialiste (FLNKS)) took a place at the petitioners' table.

The CHAIRMAN: I now call on Mr. Boenghi.

Mr. BOENGHI (FLNKS) (interpretation from French): Mr. Chairman, FLNKS is pleased to see you presiding over this Committee. You and your country have always been on the side of the oppressed, because you have shared their fate. It is always a great honour for us to be heard in this venerable Committee, the symbol of freedom to all downtrodden peoples humiliated by the oppressive system still prevailing in today's world. Rest assured that the Kanak people - just one of many colonized peoples - deeply appreciates having the opportunity to describe the conditions prevailing in our country, to air our grievances and to voice our hopes.

We also appreciate your competent Secretariat and the great patience it has shown towards the people of our tiny Territory, so far away and therefore unfamiliar with the requirements of so important an Organization as this.

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

On the occasion of this thirty-first anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples we wish to pay a well-deserved tribute to the Special Committee and to the Organization for the fulfilment of its noble mission of completing the emancipation of the oppressed peoples struggling for their freedom.

This thirty-first anniversary should not, however, overshadow the gray areas that still subsist in the world. In more than 15 Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Pacific, the Caribbean, the South Atlantic and Africa, peoples still continue to demand their right to self-determination and independence. Most of them are scattered island Territories, whose small size, remote locations and lack of natural and human resources should not be allowed to serve as a pretext for denying the inherent, inalienable rights of colonial peoples.

The major political upheavals of recent months, especially in Eastern Europe and Africa, and most recently during the Gulf crisis, should not cause the United Nations or the administering Powers to lose sight of their responsibility towards these colonial peoples and countries.

New Caledonia is one of those Non-Self-Governing Territories. After 140 years of colonial rule, France, the self-proclaimed cradle of human rights, still exercises sovereignty over the Kanak people, the colonized indigenous people of that Territory.

On Monday, 12 October 1987, our late lamented President, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, addressed the Fourth Committee on the question of New Caledonia. This is how he described his understanding of the word "colonization":

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

"Colonization for our people means the theft of our lands, the theft of our country, the theft of our homeland and the theft of our sovereignty, the theft of our right to decide our own fate as a people and to organize our own future. As a historical fact, colonization cannot be experienced and felt in the same way by the usurper and the usurped."

On 24 September 1853 the French Government seized New Caledonia and wrested sovereignty from the Kanak people. French colonial rule began. It was particularly violent towards the Kanak people, and its disastrous effects on the social, economic and cultural life of the Kanaks were especially severe. The policy of confinment of indigenous people in "reserves" hermetically sealed off within the Territory had the effect of opening up considerable opportunities for new settlers from France or recently freed gaol inmates as stockbreeders and farmers. The purpose was to suppress the Kanak people, or at least to marginalize them so as to open up the country to a policy of settlement and colonization. The "reserve" system still exists: the Kanaks still live on "indigenous reserves"; they do not own the land but simply have the use of it. The French State continues to be the owner, while entire tribes have been expelled from their native lands.

Not only was our people deprived of its dignity, but it fell victim to massacres and colonial repression; it was reduced to being a minority and relegated to the political, economic and cultural sidelines.

The Resistance took the form of a series of revolts, and ever since the loss of their sovereignty the Kanak people has vehemently demanded the return of its sovereignty and lands.

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

Among major milestones in these bloody struggles of our historic movement are the years 1855, 1878 and 1917. After 1953, following the Second World War and with the swelling of the emancipation movement of colonized peoples, our struggle went from the field of battle to the ballot box, for it was then that the Kanaks gained the right to vote.

Throughout the past 30 years, the colonial Government's policy has consistently been to strengthen institutional bonds with France, notwithstanding the Kanak people's option for emancipation and freedom.

In order to combat efforts at integration by the colonial Power and to ensure their own survival as a nation, the Kanak people organized and equipped themselves with an instrument for the purpose: FLNKS, the sole, legitimate representative of the Kanak people.

FLNKS set as its objective independence and the struggle against colonialism. From 1984 onwards, it fought the statute that was to be imposed by the Socialist Minister on the Territory, Georges Lemoine, by organizing an active boycott of elections. After the Fabius-Pisani statute of 1985, to which the Front gave its approval, we also had to combat the policy of denial of the Kanak people conducted by the Pons Government of Jacques Chirac in 1986, a policy which regrettably led to the tragic events of Ouvea in May 1988 with the massacre of 19 combatants of the Front and the imprisonment in France of 30 other persons.

It was under pressure of events set in motion by the Front and given the explosive situation of civil and military war that the French Government opened talks that led to the Matignon agreements.

The struggle waged by the Kanak people over those long years was one of national liberation aimed at the decolonization of the country and independence, a fact that has been recognized by the international community.

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

On 2 December 1986, the General Assembly decided in resolution 41/41 A to reinclude New Caledonia on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories covered by General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.

The Eighth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Harare, Zimbabwe in September 1986, decided to grant the Kanak Front an observer status, a natural stage of transition towards accession of independence by countries of the third world.

As far as concerns the regional organization, the seventeenth Forum of South Pacific Countries, held at Suva, Fiji, in July 1986, considered FLNKS' request that the Forum support the inclusion of New Caledonia on the list of countries awaiting decolonization.

More recently, in March 1990, the Spearhead Group (Papua New Guinea-Solomon-Vanuatu) included the Front as a full member of the Melanesian group. But France continues to consider any action by the international community, of which it is a prominent member, as interference in its own affairs. It has thus assumed a position of defiance against the international community. A recent example was its rejection of the request by a delegation of the South Pacific Forum to visit the Territory of New Caledonia. In order to circumvent these problems by two ministers from the Forum, even Forum personnel had to be qualify as members of the ministerial retinue and were not invited.

The Matignon agreements signed in June 1988 between the Front, representing the Kanak people, the RPCR, representing local French settler and immigrant interests, and the French Government - which has sovereignty over Kanaky - have been the result of a process begun in the field by FLNKS within the framework of a liberation struggle.

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

FLNKS considers these Matignon agreements to be a minimum basis on which a consensus was built among the three parties that signed the tripartite agreement.

First, a non-aggression pact in order to halt the spiral of violence and hatred that plunged New Caledonia into the abyss of civil and military war.

Secondly, a pact on the sharing of power - political power and especially economic power - on the part of the few who hold the wealth of the country and have the power to make the major decisions determining the evolution of the Territory.

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

Finally, a pact committing the Government of France to grant amnesty to political prisoners and to implement a set of measures to restore balance to the Territory. In 140 years of colonization, a considerable lag remains to be made up.

In 1988, the date of the signing of the Matignon Agreements, the number of Kanak professionals practising in France was as follows: only one doctor, only one judge, only one engineer, only three senior officials, no lawyers - and the list goes on. Similarly, our people were and remain virtually excluded from economic channels, with the large majority living in self-sufficiency in reservations. The catastrophic management of the land-tenure problem by successive rightist Governments of France left an enormous disagreement between the Kanaks and European settlers and between the Kanaks themselves within their communities. In brief, everything remained to be done: primary infrastructures needed to be developed; health and social facilities needed to be set up; primary health care needed to be rethought; aspects of Kanak culture had to be promoted; the economic structure in the interior of the country and on the islands needed to be built; the general economy of the Territory needed to be improved; and ties of dependence to France needed to be abolished.

FLNKS thus signed the Matignon Agreements, as they basically made it possible to make up for the lag that had accumulated over long years of an obsolete colonial system. A new statute was thus proposed for the Territory - the umpteenth statute after so many others introduced by successive Governments at the head of the French Republic. This new statute broadened the authority of the three Provinces. It established such organizations as the Agency for Rural and Land Development (ADRAF), necessary for the

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

implementation of a just and equitable land-tenure policy, and the Agency for the Development of Kanak Culture, a way to recognize and promote Kanak culture. Similarly, a structure was envisaged to accelerate the training of supervisors. Finally, in order to make it possible to integrate New Caledonia into its Oceanian environment, statutory provisions were established that paved the way for regional cooperation for the benefit of the Territory and the Provinces.

After leaving the Kanaks in total ignorance of the conduct of the affairs of the country, the Government of France finally gave them new prospects through an apprenticeship in provincial management.

The Matignon Agreements do not make it possible to begin a true process of decolonization in the Territory of New Caledonia. FLNKS has stated and repeats once again today that the Matignon Agreements do not open up a clear prospect for independence. At the very most, they can just lay the groundwork for independence.

As they disagree about the final outcome of the pact signed by the three parties, RPCR and the Government of France are gambling that in 1998, the date of the referendum on self-determination, New Caledonia will remain French. As for FLNKS, its expectation for 1998 is independence for the Kanak people and for the other communities living in the Territory, whom we will try to convince that a common destiny is possible, that an Oceanian conscience can emerge based on these years of ongoing dialogue. This is a difficult task, as French colonialism is exploiting the divisions existing among our people. However, FLNKS is prepared to challenge the France of human rights and, most particularly, the French left, to assist at least once in its colonialist history a people small in number to achieve its emancipation by allowing it to create the best conditions for acceding to viable independence.

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

Three years after the signing of the Matignon Agreements, we are only just now beginning to see things being set up with the objective of creating the requisite economic, social and cultural conditions for viable independence. We would most particularly like to draw the attention of the Committee to specific aspects.

First, in a certain number of important sectors, we lack the capacity to push the country resolutely towards independence. This is particularly the case of the sectors remaining under the control either of the local French population such as taxation, social services and import-export - matters for which responsibility is borne by the Congress of New Caledonia, where RPCR is in the majority - or of the French State which, in such sectors as education and training, land tenure, technical assistance and government infrastructures, has not demonstrated genuine political will. We must not commit ourselves to paths of development that would be in conflict with our objectives.

Secondly, it is clear today that the opponents of independence take pleasure in ploughing blindly ahead. The two sides of the colonial status quo - the political side: maintenance of the Territory within the French Republic; the economic side: the maintenance of the monopoly over importing and exporting and official transfers from France - suit them, because they can thus make enormous profits, which they invest outside New Caledonia. The statement made in May 1991 by the President of RPCR, Mr. Jacques Lafleur, as to a possible consensus in 1995 is in line with this strategy. With respect to the Agreements, this strategy, in our view, can only heighten the imbalance within the country. However, there is no need to recall that this is indeed the political objective of the RPCR with respect to the 1998 deadline. RPCR wants to keep New Caledonia as a French colony.

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

Finally, I turn to the development of French domestic policy. This fact is essential in following the development of the political process under way. Even if the opposition leaders in France have reaffirmed that the commitments of the French State will be maintained, their implementation in the field may be different. Territorial or State Administration in New Caledonia can in fact be very different from what it is today, and is already not very beneficial to us, because it continues to stick to its role of arbiter. While France does not play the role of arbiter, it is the third partner in the Matignon Agreements. So we must raise the following question: will the commitments under way with respect to, inter alia, infrastructure, training and housing be maintained by another parliamentary majority in France? An awareness of what co-existence between the right and the left in France from 1987 to 1988 has already cost us points to the reason why this question is of great political significance for our struggle.

Among the political commitments that France has only partly or not at all fulfilled is, first, amnesty to political prisoners in France. Three cases remain to be resolved in France. Secondly, the electorate. The electoral arrangements were established at the beginning of 1991, although they had been scheduled for 1989. The special commissions for the revision of voter lists met and worked easily in the interior, but in Noumea FLNKS encountered opposition in monitoring the revision. Moreover, we are in total ignorance as to the influx of immigrants, naturalizations and new arrivals. This matter is within the purview of the French State, which does not consider as immigrants any French people who might take up residence in New Caledonia. France also has the right to settle refugees from South-East Asia in our country, claiming that it is settling in France, as New Caledonia is French land, the refugees

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

who are part of the French quota set by the international community. This deliberate immigration strategy is against the recommendations of the United Nations, which calls on the Administering Authorities to prevent any immigration influx into Territories so as not to distort or upset referendums on self-determination. While those immigrants who are now being settled in our Territory cannot participate in the 1998 referendum, because they do not have the necessary 10 years of residence, they can vote in provincial assembly or territorial congress elections. These elections, as laid down by French law, only require voters to be residents for six months. The new voters are the reason why the opponents of independence are certain of winning the 1995 elections and thus of seizing control of two out of three Provinces.

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

With respect to the land tenure problem, since the Matignon Agreement, it has been within the competence of the State, through the Agency for Rural Development and Land Use (ADRAF), to carry out the policy of the acquisition and assignment of land. With respect to the acquisition of land, the record is poor because ADRAF has confined itself until now to the land purchased since 1978. Furthermore, out of 85,000 hectares, it has distributed only 30,000 hectares. Fifty-four thousand hectares still await ownership. The guarantees required by the State for development within the Kanak reserves have not yet been adopted, in order to circumvent the inalienable status of the reserves.

In the field of mining resources, the year 1990 was marked by the repurchase by the North Province (FLNKS) of the South Pacific Mining Company of Mr. Jacques Lafleur. Since that time, the company has become a tool of conquest of the economy of this sector of the country by the Kanaks. Faced with this, the French State has been developing through the intermediary of the LeNickel Company an entire strategy to allow the small miners to remain independent of the Kanak community, in order to continue support of the French colonial policy.

With regard to training, many initiatives have been undertaken since 1988, but the situation remains one of concern, with the French desire to become engineers, doctors, lawyers and so forth, while there are young people who have not had the opportunity to complete their secondary studies, and even some who have not been able to finish their primary studies.

Thus, the political balance at the present time is precarious. For the FLNKS, it is clear that if the goal of independence and the preparations for it were not guaranteed by the implementation of the agreements, it would be

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

difficult to continue to keep those commitments. Furthermore, the limits of the agreements of 1988 are already apparent in the attitudes of all sides. Despite that fact, the changes in the political behaviour which have since been recorded among the South Sea ethnic groups of New Caledonia, particularly the Wallis and Futuna Island communities of the Territory, is a new good policy, positive for our cause.

Yes, measures to correct imbalances in training and land tenure have been progressively carried out, but a long road remains to be travelled before we attain the set objectives. In any case, these measures are aimed only at making up for the delay and marginalization due to our being Kanaks, but they do not make it possible for us to attain the independence we desire.

New Caledonia is inscribed on the list of countries to be decolonized, and FLNKS must draw all the logical conclusions from that. New Caledonia wishes to be independent and the Kanak people, a colonized indigenous people, is convinced that by virtue of the provisions of resolution 1514 (XV), the independence process is irreversible and inevitable. In this respect, the French Government must begin a real decolonization process by doing its utmost to prepare the Territory for accession to independence. Restoration of the sovereignty of the Kanak people is not negotiable. The only negotiable elements are the means and the stages to achieve that goal. The ratification of the genuine process of decolonization will be the referendum on self-determination. In the view of FLNKS, that referendum must be organized on the basis of the principles and practices of the United Nations, and only the Kanak people and the victims of history can be called on to vote. That is the only condition on which the self-determination referendum would be truly a referendum on decolonization.

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

Acceptance of any other concept of the electorate might seem to be de facto acceptance, as a colonized people, of the waves of immigration which continue to arrive in our Territory at will, thanks to a policy aimed at drowning the demands for independence of the Kanak people.

Thus, FLNKS appeals to the United Nations to request the French Government to begin the decolonization of the Territory and adhere to the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV) of the United Nations Charter.

Finally, FLNKS urges the United Nations to maintain New Caledonia on the list of countries to be decolonized. We would consider any contrary attempt as a negation of all of our efforts thus far and thus a denial of the fundamental claims of the Kanak people.

We do not wish to be the forgotten people of the history of decolonization. That is why we would like to have another United Nations visiting mission to New Caledonia to follow developments in the process that has begun and to monitor how that process might lead to the independence of the Territory. Furthermore, we would like the information to be regularly provided by the Administering Authority with respect to the situation in New Caledonia, in accordance with the provisions of Article 73 (e) of the Charter.

In conclusion, I should like to express the support and solidarity of FLNKS with regard to all oppressed peoples in their struggle for freedom. On behalf of the Kanak people, I would like to thank officially the fraternal countries of the Pacific Forum for their support, as well as the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement. Of course, I also express thanks to the delegations members of this Committee that have supported us by their statements and their votes.

(Mr. Boenghi, FLNKS)

Once again, I should like to express the gratitude of the Kanak people for the support given to this question, and I repeat our confidence in the United Nations. The United Nations remains a guarantee for the Kanak people that it will not be forgotten in its march towards dignity and sovereignty.

Mr. Boenghi withdrew.

The CHAIRMAN: We have thus concluded the hearings on the item.

On behalf of the Committee and on my own behalf I wish to express the Committee's appreciation to the petitioner for the information he has furnished to the Committee.

Mr. MAINO (Papua New Guinea): On behalf of the Government of Papua New Guinea, I would like to express sincere gratitude and thanks for this opportunity to address the Committee on the current situation in New Caledonia.

Papua New Guinea wishes to associate itself fully with the South Pacific Forum communiqué regarding the question of New Caledonia, which will be circulated as a United Nations document. It is Papua New Guinea's ultimate desire to see the Kanaks, the Kanak National Socialist Liberation Front (FLNKS) and all the people of New Caledonia cooperate to achieve what they want for New Caledonia. May I reiterate here that it is definitely the desire of the Kanaks, FLNKS and the Papua New Guinea Government to see New Caledonia achieve self-determination and independence.

At this juncture, my delegation acknowledges France's commitment to ensure that the full implementation of the Matignon Accord proceed unhampered; we urge it to take particular note of the desire of the peoples of New Caledonia to achieve self-determination and independence.

With Europe being on the threshold of economic union, my delegation is concerned that the genuine desires and aspirations of the Kanaks and FLNKS may

(Mr. Maino, Papua New Guinea)

be relegated to the periphery, making it difficult for even the achievement of self-determination, let alone independence.

The new developments in the economic and social fields currently being undertaken in New Caledonia by the French authorities must be continued and should not be marginalized as a result of the preparations by France for Europe 1992.

We recognize and welcome the positive attitude of the French authorities in allowing the Forum-endorsed delegation to visit New Caledonia. This is a welcome development and my delegation feels confident that a formula could be worked out by this Committee with the French authorities to address the issue of sending visiting missions to New Caledonia.

(Mr. Maino, Papua New Guinea)

Also, my delegation continues to maintain, in spite of views to the contrary, that principles and practices of the United Nations insofar as they relate to New Caledonia must be adhered to; if not, this must be acknowledged in our deliberations on the question.

Nevertheless, given the high convergence of views and broad consensus evident in the General Assembly and, especially, in the Special Committee of 24, I am confident that we will be able to bring about the implementation of the desires and aspirations of the people of New Caldeonia in conjunction with the French authorities.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the representative of Vanuatu, who will speak on behalf of the members of the South Pacific Forum.

Mr. VAN LIEROP (Vanuatu): Once again I have the honour and privilege of speaking on behalf of the seven countries that are members of the South Pacific Forum and Members also of the United Nations: Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

We are pleased that Ambassador Alarcon de Quesada is serving as Acting Chairman of the Committee. He and his country are well known for their commitment to the decolonization process and to the principles and practices of the United Nations in connection with that important process.

To the countries of our region the decolonization process continues to be one of the most important undertakings of the international community. Thus, this Committee, in our opinion, remains an important focal point of efforts to bring about the universal realization of the historic Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Neither the Charter of the United Nations nor resolution 1514 (XV) envisions anything less than a world free from any form of colonialism.

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

At one time, the dream of a world free of colonialism may have seemed to some to be a lofty ideal. However, this Committee has made great contributions to the inexorable march of the decolonization process. Today the dream is well within reach and the lofty ideal can be realized. We applaud the international consensus that has brought us this far in the decolonization process. We also renew our commitment to continue to expend our efforts in the furtherance of that consensus.

At the most recent meeting of the South Pacific Forum, held at Palikir, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, on 29 and 30 July 1991, South Pacific Heads of Government once again reaffirmed the importance of the universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles and practices of the United Nations pertaining thereto.

As is well known, the South Pacific is one of the regions that contain many of the world's remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. Of those Territories, New Caledonia has been and continues to be a major preoccupation of the countries of the region.

The Forum once again drew attention to the close links that existed between the people of New Caledonia, particularly the indigenous Kanaks, and other peoples of the South Pacific. The Forum also acknowledged the constructive actions being taken by all involved to facilitate the further development of those links and noted the positive measures being pursued in New Caledonia by the French authorities in cooperation with all sectors of the population to promote equitable political, economic and social development in the Territory in order to provide a framework for its peaceful evolution to self-determination.

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

Regional Heads of Government stressed the great importance of equitable economic and social development, transparency in the preparation of electoral rolls and continued dialogue among all the parties involved in New Caledonia in preparation for an act of self-determination consistent with the principles and practices of the United Nations, in which all options, including independence, would be open and which would safeguard the rights of the indigenous Kanaks and those of all other New Caledonians.

They also expressed the hope that the French authorities and others would expand their assistance for education and training opportunities for the Kanak population in order to enable all New Caledonians to exercise their right of self-determination under the best possible conditions. In that connection they also reiterated their hope that the French authorities would facilitate regular visits to New Caledonia by visiting missions of the United Nations.

The Forum is continuing its active and vigilant observation of the developments in New Caledonia. In acknowledgement of the vital role of the United Nations the Forum intends to share its observations, through the distribution at the United Nations of the report of its Ministerial Committee, which recently visited New Caledonia.

Turning to the draft text before the Committee in document A/AC.109/L.1766, the seven South Pacific Forum members that are also Members of the United Nations recall that for the past three years the Committee and subsequently the General Assembly adopted similar texts on the question of New Caledonia by consensus. As in the three previous years, this draft text recites many, but certainly not all, of the concerns of the countries of the South Pacific.

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

Like most draft resolutions, it is the product of compromise and moderation in the pursuit of consensus. In that regard, the draft text mirrors the decolonization process itself. Much more could be said in a draft resolution on New Caledonia. The South Pacific Forum communiqué makes that clear. However, we believe it important to encourage the conciliatory process in New Caledonia. Thus we support the draft resolution and urge its adoption as a reasonable compromise in the pursuit of consensus here at the United Nations.

New Caledonia has turned an important corner. The immediate threat of a tragic civil conflagration has receded. Much more remains to be done, particularly in addressing major social and economic imbalances. It is our hope and our expectation that in encouraging the aforementioned conciliatory process we will be contributing to furthering the decolonization process in a manner that is consistent with the principles and practices of the United Nations.

We thank members and their countries once again for their time and their attention to this important matter. Their efforts continue to serve us all in our common and noble cause: to achieve the universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The CHAIRMAN: I call on the Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea to introduce draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1766.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): I am grateful for this opportunity to introduce draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1766, entitled "Question of New Caledonia", sponsored by the delegations of Fiji and Papua New Guinea. At the outset I should like to convey my sincere gratitude to all concerned

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

parties who have been involved in producing what I believe is an acceptable text under the existing circumstances for the Committee's positive consideration and adoption by consensus.

The Committee is fully aware of my delegation's views and position on the question of New Caledonia, and I feel confident that there are positive signs on the horizon that all the parties concerned will achieve an amicable solution in line with the aspirations and wishes of the Kanaks, the Front de libération nationale kanake socialiste (FLNKS) and all the people of New Caledonia. Self-determination and independence are the ultimate goal that the Kanaks, FLNKS, the Papua New Guinea Government and others are working towards. My delegation appeals to the Committee to assist and cooperate with all parties concerned to achieve that objective.

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

My delegation and the other members of the South Pacific Forum that are also Members of the United Nations would very much like to see the "principles and practices of the United Nations and independence" incorporated in the formulation of the draft resolution. However, the political climate is not yet ripe to do so, and we will continue to work closely with the other parties concerned to reach that objective.

The draft resolution notes that new developments, especially in the economic and social fields, are being encouraged by the French authorities, and we should like to see that they are genuinely undertaken in the interests of the Kanaks, FLNKS and the people of New Caledonia.

The draft resolution takes into account the close links that exist between the people of New Caledonia and the South Pacific community, and also the positive efforts of the French authorities, in consultation with the Kanaks, FLNKS, and all the peoples of New Caledonia.

It is important that positive developments towards a genuine act of self-determination and independence be fully and genuinely encouraged by all parties concerned, especially the Administering Authority, so that the people of New Caledonia, in particular the Kanaks, achieve an acceptable and satisfactory level of socio-economic and political lifestyle.

My delegation and other colleagues would very much like to see the inclusion of the subject of visiting missions to New Caledonia in the draft resolution, but once again we have not yet reached the political climate to achieve such an important objective in the interest of the people of New Caledonia and the Special Committee on decolonization. Article 73 e of the Charter is so very important to the work of the Committee and visiting

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

missions to the Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories must be encouraged by all parties concerned, with the full support of the Administering Authorities.

My delegation, and others in the South Pacific region, are very much encouraged by the decision of the French authorities to allow visits to New Caledonia by the members of the South Pacific Forum, and we should like to take this opportunity to thank them most sincerely for providing this important facility to us at this crucial time in the Territory's development. The recent visit to New Caledonia by the South Pacific Forum Ministerial Monitoring Committee is a most welcome sign.

I have the honour and pleasure, on behalf of all the interested parties, including the members of the South Pacific Forum and the sponsors, to present to the Committee draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1766 on the question of New Caledonia for its positive consideration and adoption by consensus, as the draft text reflects the realities and circumstances surrounding the situation in New Caledonia.

The CHAIRMAN: Since I hear no comments, the Committee will now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1766. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee is prepared to adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

Draft resolution A/AC.109/L.1766 was adopted.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): I should like to take this opportunity to thank you, Sir, and the Committee for taking this action, as it reflects the situation on the ground as borne out by the statements of all parties.

I should also like to take note of the working paper on New Caledonia (A/AC.109/1079) dated 30 July 1991. On page 7 of this document, paragraph 27

(Mr. Lohia, Papua New Guinea)

makes reference to the Melanesian Spearhead Group and its decision. Because of the importance of the information, I would request that the Secretariat take appropriate action to correct the incorrect information that they have included in this report. For instance, FLNKS was admitted to the Melanesian Spearhead Group in the Solomon Islands in 1990. Moreover, the Melanesian Spearhead Communiqué of 1991 in Vanuatu is quite different from what appears in the report. Therefore, I would appeal to you, Mr. Chairman, to ask the Secretariat to correct this paragraph.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sure that the Secretariat will proceed accordingly.

Unless any other delegation wishes to make comments on the resolution which has just been adopted, the Committee has thus concluded its consideration of the item.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: Before adjourning, I wish to inform members that at our meetings on Monday, 12 August, the Committee will commence its consideration of the item entitled "Special Committee decision of 15 August 1990 concerning Puerto Rico". I wish to appeal to delegations to be punctual, as we have a great number of petitioners - almost 60 - appearing before the Committee. We will need a quorum to grant the related requests at the outset of our meeting.

I note in today's Journal that a meeting of the open-ended Drafting Group is scheduled to be held following the adjournment of this meeting. Since I have been asked by certain delegations not to convene the open-ended Drafting Group meeting this afternoon, and taking into account the late hour, I propose to proceed accordingly. Therefore, if I hear no objection, today's scheduled meeting of the open-ended Drafting Group is cancelled.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): May I also suggest that the present consultation procedure that we follow on this important draft resolution be changed to adapt to the previous practice where specific meetings were held for consultations, rather than holding them after the formal meeting. I say this because we are taxing the Secretariat and interpretation staff. It is important for us to have interpretations when we are working on the draft resolution, so I suggest that perhaps some afternoons should be allocated for this particular work.

The CHAIRMAN: I think that your proposal is a very fair one and I can assure you that both the officers of the Committee and the Secretariat will go along with the idea.

Mr. LEHNE (Norway): I should like to support the suggestion just made by the representative of Papua New Guinea, and as endorsed by yourself, Sir. We indeed need to have some time in whatever setting, and it should be open-ended, but it should also be limited to those delegations which have been actively engaged, and still want to be actively engaged, in the question of the drafting of the resolutions, but of course it will be open to everybody.

(Mr. Lehne, Norway)

As to the matter of interpretation and other conference services, I am not sure to what extent they might be available parallel to the formal meetings of this Committee. My proposal would be that we try to hold parallel meetings, if possible with some interpretation. I do not think we can have full interpretation coverage parallel to the formal meetings of this Committee, but I should like to be enlightened by the Secretariat.

The CHAIRMAN: As all delegations know, we have a problem with having a quorum in one forum.

Mr. LOHIA (Papua New Guinea): I was not suggesting parallel meetings. I was suggesting that a specific time be allocated in the afternoons, if this can be managed, to keep within the regular working hours of the Secretariat and interpretation services so that there would be no additional expense or time incurred.

The CHAIRMAN: I can assure the representative of Papua New Guinea that I have grasped his idea.

Mr. LEHNE (Norway): Now even I have understood the idea, but I think that, given our time frame and programme of work, some of the delegations concerned with their remaining unresolved texts will want to get together, however informally - even without conference services - in order to sort out those differences. While I would appeal in particular to the African members, I appeal also to all members of the Committee to see if it is not possible to come together in an informal setting to try to solve these questions during our lengthy plenary meetings that will take place next week.

The CHAIRMAN: I can only assure all delegations that the Bureau and the Secretariat will do their best to take these proposals into account.

Mr. BEREZOVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): I want to support the proposal made by the representative of Papua New Guinea: it is a valuable one and gives us an opportunity to work properly, carefully and precisely on the complicated draft resolutions now before us.

In my view, the proposal made by the representative of Papua New Guinea is not in conflict with the one made by the representative of Norway, who is concerned that delegations might want to meet informally. The procedure would be very useful and I think that we should be allowed to hold such consultations. At the same time, the proposal made by the representative of Papua New Guinea is important because it would provide an opportunity to all delegations, whether in this chamber or in a side room, and during working hours, to work on the draft resolutions and to take account of the views of other members of the Committee on these documents.

In this respect I would cite as precedent the practice followed last year which proved useful and productive in the work on the draft resolutions.

The CHAIRMAN: If there are no further comments, may I take it that it is the wish of the Committee to cancel today's meeting of the open-ended Working Group?

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: The next meeting of the Committee will be held at 10 o'clock on Monday morning, 12 August.

I would once again remind members to be punctual, because we have more than 15 petitioners wishing to speak Monday morning.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.